



The female may deposit up to 265,000 eggs. The lifespan of a muskie rarely exceeds 12 years.

Habitats

constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

uncommon; native

Iowa Range

scattered throughout central Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.

muskellunge

Esox masquinongy

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Salmoniformes
Family:	Esocidae

Features

The muskellunge has a torpedo shaped body and a large head with duckbill-like jaws lined with sharp teeth. The gill covers and cheeks have scales only on the upper half. Its back is silver-gray to yellow-green with scattered dark spots or bars. The state record muskellunge weighed over 50 pounds and was 52 1/2 inches long. A five year-old fish averages almost 36 inches long.

Natural History

The muskellunge lives in lakes and pools of slow-moving streams. It prefers clear water with abundant vegetation. It eats fish. It is a solitary fish, hiding near submerged objects and swimming out to capture prey. Prior to 1960 very few muskellunge had been collected in Iowa waters. It has since been stocked into larger lakes to provide a trophy fishery. Natural reproduction is negligible, so populations are dependent on stocking. Spawning occurs in early spring with eggs scattered over dead plants in tributary streams and lake channels.